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AUTHOR Matsuda, Paul Kei
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ABSTRACT

Just like their native-English-speaking peers, the many international students participating in United States higher education are subject to the institutional practices of composition studies. Those international students who are also English as a Second Language (ESL) students have special needs. In addition to the obvious grammar problems, many come from rhetorical traditions where conventions of written discourse are different from those valued by native speakers of English. Their expectations of teacher-student relationship as well as the notion of collaboration may not be compatible with expectations shared by the teacher and their American peers, and they may not share the cultural assumptions that are taken for granted by their teachers and classmates. Few composition theorists, however, seem to include second-language perspectives in their discussion, and empirical studies have traditionally been excluding ESL writers. Second-language writing issues are also absent from the history of composition studies. When World War II's end brought a large number of international ESL students to American higher education, ESL became a concern among members of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. But ESL became separated from composition studies when TESL and composition both became "professionalized." The attitude of separation became formalized at a 1965 workshop whose participants recommended that speakers of English as a second language should be taught in special classes by teachers with training in the field. However, both ESL and composition specialists should be prepared to work with ESL writers. (Contains 12 references.) (NKA)

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Composition Studies and Second-Language Writing: A History of the Disciplinary Division of Labor

Paul Kei Matsuda
Purdue University

I want to begin this paper by stating a simple fact. All of us in this room—and all of us who teach writing—are potentially, if not already, teachers of second language writing. The number of nonnative speakers of English in U.S. higher education has been increasing continuously since the 1940s. Today, there are over 450,000 international students, mostly from non-English speaking countries. In addition, there is an equally significant number of ESL students who are permanent residents or citizens of the United States. And just like their native-English-speaking peers, these students are required to take composition courses—often after completing ESL requirements. In other words, ESL students are also subject to the institutional practices of composition studies.

I think those of us who have had ESL writers in our writing classes understand that ESL students have special needs. In addition to the obvious grammar problems, which may never go away in their lifetime, ESL students may come from rhetorical traditions where conventions of written discourse are different from those that are valued by native speakers of English. Their expectations of teacher-student relationship as well as the notion of collaboration may not be compatible with expectations shared by the teacher and their peers who speak English as their native tongue. And they may not share the cultural assumption that are taken for granted by the teachers and their classmates. With the increase of ESL students, I would hope that the development of composition studies in the last three decades reflect their special needs.

Unfortunately, it has not been the case. Until fairly recently, the discussion of ESL issues in composition studies has been few and far between as if the second-language aspect of writing is not an important concern for composition specialists. Few composition theorists seem to include second-language perspectives in their discussion, and empirical studies have traditionally been excluding ESL writers because they are "outliers" or "exceptions."

Second-language writing issues are also absent from the history of composition studies. So far, I haven't been able to find any substantial discussion of ESL issues in the work of influential historians of composition studies. Perhaps this is because ESL writing has not been considered as part of composition studies, even though we have ESL writers in our classrooms.

This omission from histories of composition studies poses a serious problem for the second-language issues in composition studies. The lack of second-language elements in the history of composition studies, and therefore in our sense of professional identity, continues to reinscribe the view that the responsibility of teaching ESL writers falls upon professionals in another discipline: teaching English as a second language (TESL).

This view of the interdisciplinary relationship is what I call the *disciplinary division of labor* (Matsuda, 1998; see also Matsuda [in press] for a more extensive discussion of this historical development). This view of the interdisciplinary relationship seems to reflect the value of the two disciplines that sought to establish their own identities, especially during their formative years. But the division of labor is not a productive metaphor because it separates writing issues into first-language and second-language components in our disciplinary practices. In other words, composition studies, for the most part, has been ignoring the presence of ESL writers in our classrooms.

My goal today is to explain how this division of labor was created in the first place. For this purpose, I will consider the historical developments of composition studies and TESL between the 1940s and the 1960s.

Creation of the Disciplinary Division

The teaching of ESL has not always had an institutional identity separate from composition studies. When the end of the World War II brought a large number of international ESL students to US higher education, ESL became a concern among the members of 4C's.

Problems associated with international ESL students often became a topic of discussion at this conference. Between 1955 and 1966, a number of panels and a series of workshops on ESL issues were presented at the conference. The presenters included a number of prominent ESL specialists, such as Kenneth Croft, Robert Lado, Paul Sullivan, and Robert B. Kaplan.

Among the key players during the formative years of 4C's was Harold B. Allen, a founding president of TESOL—an organization for ESL specialists. In a historical review of *CCC*, Phillips, Greenberg and Gibson (1993) count Allen among the most frequently published authors of major articles as well as the most frequently cited authors between 1950 and 1964. Characterizing him as an "early shapers of the discipline," they also note that Allen "was active in the national organization" and that "his reprinted speeches about the future of the profession were often referred to in *CCC* articles" (pp. 450-452). In fact, Allen was a member of the general committee for the first 4C's meeting in 1949, and he chaired the Conference in 1952.

In the early years, ESL specialists were not the only ones who attended those ESL sessions. In 1956, for example, faculty from institutions without ESL programs constituted the majority of the participants in the ESL workshop. One of the central topics of discussion at this

workshop was the question of how to deal with international ESL students in the regular composition course at institutions where neither ESL specialists nor separate ESL courses were available (Foreign, 1956, p. 122). This is a question that continues to be relevant today.

As I have explained, ESL was very much a part of composition studies during the 1950s and the 1960. Then, the question is, "How did ESL become separated from composition studies?" I would argue that it was related to the professionalization of TESL and composition studies.

Before the 1940s, ESL was not generally considered to be a profession in the United States. But this began to change in 1941, when the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan was established by Charles C. Fries. Both Jim Berlin and Bob Connors mention Fries as Fred Newton Scott's student. He is also known as someone who promoted structural linguistics in English studies. But neither Berlin nor Connors mention his work in ESL—perhaps because ESL is not part of composition studies.

The ELI at Michigan had a lasting impact on the professional status of TESL in a number of ways. First, the ELI provided a model for intensive language programs across the United States. Second, it offered a professional preparation program in TESL. This was especially important because, before the 1940s, it was commonly believed that anyone whose native language was English was qualified to teach ESL—much as many thought any literate person could teach writing. One of the most significant contributions that Fries's ELI made to the ESL profession was to dispel this myth. As Fries (1948) later wrote:

> The native speaker himself however, unless he has been specially trained to observe and analyze his own language processes, finds great difficulty in describing the special

> characteristics either of the sounds he makes or of the structural devices he uses. His comments about his own language more often mislead than help a foreigner. (p. 13)

With the creation of the professional preparation program at the University of Michigan, the teaching of ESL began to move toward the status of a respectable profession.

This sense of professionalism became pervasive because many new TESL graduate programs and intensive programs were staffed by graduates or former staff of the Michigan ELI (Allen, 1973). Fries's 1945 book, *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language,* and other publications—including popular textbooks and a journal—also contributed to the professionalization of TESL.

The increasing sense of profession also led ESL specialists to argue that ESL should be taught only by trained specialists in separate language programs. In fact, the ESL panel in 1961 focused almost entirely on this issue. Here is an example: Clifford Prator of the UCLA argued that ESL teaching

> can be well done only by a specialist with an analytical knowledge of English and with deep insights into the way the student's native tongue interferes with his learning of the new language. The usual freshman composition instructor is not equipped to do the work, to say nothing of the person whose only qualification is that he speaks English as his mother tongue. (Freshman, 1961, p. 156).

This attitude was formalized by members of 1965 workshop, which was chaired by Bob Kaplan. They recommended that "speakers of English as a second language should be taught *in special classes* by teachers who have had training in teaching English as a second language" (ESL

programs, 1965, p. 203). As the argument for specialization of TESL became pervasive, composition teachers in general, who were also seeking to establish their disciplinary identity, began to lose interest in ESL sessions.

The decline of interest in ESL issues among composition teachers was evident as the number of participants at 4C's workshops on ESL issues decreased. (In fact, nobody came to the 1965 session. Can you imagine how discouraging that must have been for the presenters? Bob Kaplan tried one more time in 1966, but he was so discouraged that he never returned to 4C's for 31 years—until Victor invited him as a featured speaker for this year's conference.)

At the 1966 meeting of 4C's, the ESL workshop, chaired again by Kaplan, made a decision that removed the ESL element from composition studies almost entirely. The "small but loquacious group" of ESL specialists at the workshop resolved "somewhat sadly . . . that, given the small attendance at this workshop for several years under the aegis of CCCC, the group should meet hereafter only at NCTE meetings" (Teaching, 1966, p. 198). In the same year, TESOL was created as a professional organization to serve the needs of a growing number of ESL specialists. The creation of the professional organization that devoted itself entirely to ESL issues and the decline of interest in those issues among composition specialists led to the separation of writing issues into first-language and second-language components. This is how the division of labor was institutionalized.

The best way to illustrate the effect of this institutionalization of the division of labor is to consider the exchange between Joseph Friend of Southern Illinois University and Gordon Wilson of Miami University of Ohio. At the executive committee meeting in April 1967, Friend asked if sessions on ESL writing could be included in the program. Wilson, who was the executive

committee chair at the time, responded to Friend's inquiry by pointing out that the "competition of TESOL might prevent a sufficient number of people from attending a workshop" (Burke, 1967, p. 205). Although Wilson suggested that "a panel [on ESL issues] might be advisable" (p. 205), sessions concerning nonnative speakers of English remained absent from CCCC for about 10 years.

Conclusion

As I have explained, the professionalization of TESL between the 1940s and the 1960s led to the division of writing issues into first- and second-language components. And because TESL took the second language part, composition studies by implication came to be defined as first-language composition. But this is not an accurate characterization of what happens in composition studies. We don't have native speakers in ESL classrooms, be we do have ESL students in composition classrooms. Both ESL and composition specialists should be prepared to work with ESL writers. Yet, ESL students in many writing classrooms continue to be taught by writing teachers with little, if any, preparation in working with ESL writers.

ESL issues has become somewhat more visible at this conference, but I can't really say that composition studies as a whole has become more sensitive to the needs of ESL writers. Let me read what Ann Johns, an ESL writing specialist, wrote in 1993:

> Some of us are active in CCCC partially because we feel obligated to educate the [composition] instructors about our student populations, research, and pedagogical concerns. However, our CCCC panels seem to attract only the ESL people who attend

> this conference; the [composition] instructors have shown little interest, so far, in who we are, who our students are, and what we do. (Johns, 1993, p. 86).

I'd like to conclude this paper by restating an important fact. We have many ESL students in our writing classrooms. And I think all of us who teach writing should be prepared to meet their special needs.

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